SPEECH

OF

HON. WM. H. BISSELL, OF ILLINOIS,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 21, 1850,

In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the Resolution referring the President's Message to the appropriate Standing Committees.

Mr. BISSELL said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Our discussions in this Committee have already produced a profound and painful sensation throughout the Union. The public mind has become agitated and anxious, and oppressed with apprehensions of impending calamity. This state of things, sir, ought not to continue; or, at any rate, that uncertainty which makes the future more terrible than would perhaps the realization of our worst fears, ought to be removed. If this Government of ours is really so near its end as gentlemen here declare it to be; or if its longer continuance depends upon contingencies so uncertain, it were well that we knew it now, that we might make timely preparation. If, on the other hand, the apprehensions I have spoken of are groundless, the people ought, in mercy, to be undeceived. They ought to be undeceived at once, sir, in order that they may have that repose and conscious security to which they are entitled under a government created and sustained by their own hands.

Reluctant as I am to add to the public anxiety, I yet do not feel at liberty to withhold the expression of my own opinion upon the absorbing topic of this discussion, and of the day. And I do not hesitate to declare, as my settled conviction, that, unless representatives who have assumed to speak for the slaveholding States have greatly mistaken the purposes and intentions of the *people* of those States, war and bloodshed, consequent upon an attempt to overthrow this Government, are inevitable. This declaration I desire should go forth to the country; and with it the reasons upon which my opinion is based. These reasons are found in the extracts which I shall quote, first, from the speech of the honorable gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. BROWN.] Here are the extracts:

"Whilst you have been heaping outrage upon outrage, adding insult to insult, our people have been calmly calculating the value of the Union. The question has been considered in all its bearings, and our minds are made up."

"We owe it to you, to ourselves, to our common country, to the friends of freedom throughout the world, to warn you that we intend to submit no longer."

"Long years of outrage upon our feelings and disregard of our rights have awakened in every southern heart a feeling of stern resistance. Think what you will, say what you will, perpetrate again and again if you will, these acts of lawless tyranny; the day and the hour is at hand when every southern son will rise in rebellion, when every tongue will say, give us justice or give us death."

"Go home and tell your people the issue is made up; they must now choose between non-interference with southern rights on the one side, and a dissolution of the Union on the other."

"If you fancy that our devotion to the Union will keep us in the Union, you are mistaken. Our love for the Union ceases with the justice of the Union. We cannot love oppression, nor hug tyranny to our bosoms."

"I tell you candidly, we have calculated the value of the Union. Your injustice has driven us to it. Your oppression justifies me to-day in discussing the value of the Union, and I do so freely and fearlessly. Your press, your people, and your pulpit, may denounce this as treason; be it so. You may sing hosannas to the Union—it is well. British lords called it treason in our fathers when they resisted British tyranny. British orators were eloquent in their eulogiums on the British Crown. Our fathers felt the oppression, they saw the hand that aimed the blow, and resolved to resist. The result is before the world. We will resist, and trust to God and our own stout hearts for the consequences."

"The South afraid of dissolving the Union!—why should we fear? What is there to alarm us or awaken our apprehensions? Are we not able to maintain ourselves? Shall eight millions of freemen, with more than one hundred millions of annual exports, fear to take their position among the nations of the earth? With our cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco, products of a southern soil, yielding us annually more than a hundred millions of dollars, need we fear the frowns of the world?"

"Have we any reason to *fear* a dissolution of the Union? Look at the question dispassionately, and answer to yourselves the important inquiry, Can anything be expected from the fears of the southern people? Do not deceive yourselves—look at things as they really are. For myself, I can say with a clear conscience, we do not fear it; we are not appalled at the prospect before us; we deprecate disunion, but we do not fear it; we know our position too well for that."

"Have we anything to fear from you in the event of dissolution? A little gasconade, and sometimes a threat or two."

"As to there being any conflict of arms growing out of a dissolution, I have not thought it at all probable. You complain of your association with slaves in the Union. We propose to take them out of the Union—to dissolve the unpleasant association. Will you seek a battle-field to renew, amid blood and carnage, this loathsome association? I take it for granted that you will not. But if you should, we point you to the record of the past, and warn you, by its blood-stained pages, that we shall be ready to meet you."

These extracts from the speech of the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. BROWN] are sufficient for our present purpose.

The gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN,] tells us "*what is the view presented in prospect to many of the highest intellects of the South;*" and it is substantially this: that as a separate Confederacy the slaveholding States "might expend as much as the United States ever did in time of peace up to the beginning of Gen. Jackson's administration, and still have on hand twenty-five millions of dollars to devote to the making railroads, opening harbors and rivers, and for other domestic purposes." The same gentleman has thus disposed, in advance, of some *little matters* pertaining to the interior regulations of the "southern confederacy" to be: "The nothern tier of counties in Kentucky," says he, "would perhaps be obliged to remove their slaves to the South. But

there would be to her advantages in the change similar to those of Maryland. Kentucky supplies the South with live stock to a great extent; but she has to encounter the competition of Ohio and other northwestern States. *If the production of these States were subject to a duty*, she might for a time have a monopoly in the trade." I doubt not, sir, that it will astonish the people of the great West and Northwest to find that the fathers of the "*southern confederacy*" have disposed of the navigation of the Mississippi with such celerity, as much as it will the people of Kentucky to learn that their slaves are henceforth to be removed South—*instead of North*. The same gentleman, [Mr. CLINGMAN,] has divulged his plan for removing—though not quite so gently—all those in Kentucky and the other slaveholding States who hesitate about swearing allegiance to this "southern confederacy." He intimates that it will not take as long to hang them as it did the "Tories in the Revolution."

I think, Mr. Chairman, that I have now given extracts enough to justify the opinion I expressed at the outset of my remarks. We cannot fail to see that if the feelings, purposes, and intentions of the *people* of the slave holding states are correctly represented in these speeches, our countrymen may well apprehend the most fearful calamities. The subject has been calmly considered in all its aspects by the *highest intellects* of the South. It has been ascertained by calculation that if the southern States were separated from the northern, not only would they escape from "northern aggression" in future, but they would also derive a direct pecuniary advantage of $25,000,000 per annum. And though it does not appear that the *amount* of duty to be paid by the people of the West and Northwest to the "southern confederacy," for the privilege of navigating the Mississippi river has yet been fixed, it nevertheless does appear that such a duty is to be exacted. I allude to these things, sir, to show the minute calculations that have been entered into in reference to the altered condition of things consequent upon the meditated dissolution of the Union. They show an advanced stage in the progress of this movement which, in my judgment, will astound the country.

Now, sir, let us see if we can glean from these gentlemen's speeches the shadowing forth of any plan by which this movement is to be commenced and carried out. I first quote from the speech of the gentleman from Alabama, [Mr. INGE :]

"Will the Representatives of the North attempt, by the power of numbers, to outrage the Constitution and degrade the South by the admission of this Territory [California] as a State, without the offer of some equivalent? I suggest to them to remember that we are sworn to support the Constitution, and could scarcely sit in tame acquiescence and witness its open and shameful violation. The attempted consummation of such an act would be the overthrow of the Constitution which the people we represent would resist 'to the last extremity.' We are here as the Representatives of the people, but are our obligations to the Constitution and the South less than those of other individual citizens, who, in the aggregate are the *people*? We assume *additional obligations* when we come as Representatives; but are we relieved from those which rested upon us as private citizens? My individual opinion is, that if the southern people ought to resist a measure of aggression, after its consummation, we here are under the same or a higher obligation to resist its consummation. These suggestions are made, not in the nature of threat or menace. I do not underrate the firmness of the North; as a matter of discretion, it is always proper to assume that your antagonist is firm, even if the fact be doubtful. But the course proper to be pursued in any and every event is for the determination of southern members. I am willing to suggest, and if my course is not approved, to follow any path of honor which may be pointed out by those who are older and wiser. I trust that we shall stand together as one man, and present our breasts as the shield of the Constitution."

This language, sir, scarcely admits of a doubtful construction. I understand it to mean this: That the gentleman considers himself and other southern Representatives as acting here in a double capacity, first, as representatives, in which character they are to resist the passage of an unconstitutional law, (as, for instance, one admitting California in the Union,) in the manner and by the forms prescribed by the Constitution and the rules of this House; secondly, as *private citizens*, in which characters they are bound to resist the passage of an aggressive law in the same way that private citizens may resist aggression upon their rights. I feel quite sure that I have not mistaken the proper construction to be put upon the gentleman's language. But, as I have given the entire paragraph, let it speak for itself. Whatever doubts there may be as to the proper construction of that paragraph, there can be none, none at all, as to the one which I now quote from the speech of the gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN,] already referred to:

"But it is advised (says he) in certain portions of the northern press, that the members from that section ought to expel such as interrupt their proceedings. Let them try the experiment. I tell gentlemen that this is our slaveholding Territory. We do not intend to leave it. If they think they can remove us, it is a proper case for trial. In the present temper of the public mind, it is probable that a collision of the kind here might electrify the country, as did the little skirmish at Lexington the colonies in their then excited state. Such a struggle, whoever might prove the victors in it, would not leave a quorum here to do business. Gentlemen may call this treason, high *treason*—the highest treason that the world ever saw. But their words are idle. We shall defeat their movement against us."

If this does not sufficiently show where and how the revolution is to commence, let us turn again to the speech of the gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. BROWN,] and read another extract:

"My own opinion is this: that we should resist the introduction of California as a State, *and resist it successfully;* resist it by our votes first, and lastly by other means. *We can, at least, force an adjournment without her admission.* This being done, we are safe. The southern States, in convention at Nashville, will devise means for vindicating their rights. I do not know what these means *will* be, but I know what they *may* be, and with propriety and safety. They may be to carry slaves into all of southern California, as the property of sovereign States, and there hold them, as we have a right to do; and, if molested, defend them, as is both our right and duty.

"We ask you to give us our rights by NON-INTERVENTION; if you refuse, I am for taking them by ARMED OCCUPATION."

Resist the passage of a law admitting California first by votes, and lastly by "*other means!*" Mr. Chairman, does the Constitution which we are sworn to support, or the rules of this House, point out to us any "*other means*" of resisting the enactment of a law, except by means of votes? We can adjourn. But how adjourn without *voting* an adjournment? "*Force* an adjournment," says the gentleman. And that *force* is the "other means" by which the admission of California is to be resisted, "*and resisted successfully.*" And what next? Why, the *Nashville Convention* is to meet. Then what? "Carry slaves into all of 'southern California, as the property of sovereign 'States, and there hold them, as we have a right 'to do; and if molested, defend them, as is both

'our right and duty." And thus is California to be "*taken*" by "armed occupation." Alas for the 100,000 men already there, or on their way thither, from whom California is to be taken by force, and held by armed occupation, that slavery may be introduced there against their will!

I doubt not, Mr. Chairman, that by this time you and this committee are satisfied, as I am, that unless the intentions of the people of the slaveholding States have been mistaken by some of their Representatives here, a conflict of arms between the Government of the United States and a portion of the citizens thereof is inevitable.

But, sir, I have never permitted myself to doubt the patriotism of the American people. And I shall be slow, especially, to distrust that quality in the people of the generous South. Left to their own unprejudiced judgment and their own sound reflections, I shall have no fear. I dare hardly answer, however, for the effect which the speeches, especially that of the gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. BROWN,] may have upon the minds of a gallant people, naturally ardent and impulsive. Indeed, sir, I shudder at the thought of the effect which passages like that which I shall now quote, may, I had almost said *must*, produce on the feelings of our southern brethren. Receiving it in good faith, as we are bound to suppose they will, as a faithful statement of the cruelties and enormities about to be visited upon them by the hands of their northern brethren, it would be strange, indeed, if they failed to be wrought up to the most intense degree of excitement and exasperation:

"Our country is to be made desolate. We are to be driven from our homes—the homes hallowed by all the sacred associations of family and friends. We are to be sent, like a people accursed of God, to wander through the land, homeless, houseless, and friendless; or, what is ten thousand times worse than these, than all, remain in a country now prosperous and happy and see ourselves, our wives and children, degraded to a social position with the black race. These, these are the frightful, terrible consequences you would entail upon us. Picture to yourselves Hungary, resisting the powers of Austria and Russia; and if Hungary, which had never tasted liberty, could make such stout resistance, what may you not anticipate from eight millions of southrons made desperate by your aggression."

Do you know, Mr. Chairman, of any acts committed or meditated by the North against the people of the slaveholding States, that can by any possibility justify such declarations as those I have quoted? I know of none, and I am sure the gentleman from Mississippi will find it very difficult to point them out to his constituents. It is easy, indeed, to deal in general charges against the North; and when requested to specify those charges, to say, as the honorable gentleman from Mississippi does, "I will not recount the story of our wrongs." But will such a course satisfy a people, patriotic, intelligent and inquiring? Future developments will show.

And what, sir, are the causes assigned to justify the act of dissolving this Union? They are alleged aggressions by the non-slaveholding States upon the rights of the slaveholding, in respect to slavery. All the charges put forth against the non-slaveholding States have reference to that question solely; and they are all comprised and compendiously set forth in a single brief sentence which I here quote from the speech before referred to of the gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN.] After referring at some length to the benefits and advantages of slavery, he says:

"In spite, however, of these great facts, which ought to strike all impartial minds, the course of the North has been constantly aggressive on this question."

Now, sir, on behalf of the North, I repel the charge. And I affirm that, for anything the North has done to justify the overthrow of this Government, any attempt to do so, is naked treason. What, sir, the course of the free States been "constantly aggressive" upon the South on the slavery question? Let us see. Since the adoption of the Constitution seventeen States have been admitted into the Union. Of this number, *nine* are slaveholding States, and *eight* non-slaveholding. Now, sir, it has so happened that at every time when any of these slaveholding States have applied for admission, the North has had complete ascendancy in both branches of Congress, consequently the power to exclude any or all of them. They were all admitted, slaveholding as they were, with just such constitutions as they had chosen to adopt for themselves. Is this a part of that "aggressive course" on the slavery question which the North has "constantly" pursued?

Again: Of the territory embraced within the seventeen States thus admitted, the free States comprise 333,259 square miles; and the slave States 730,376 square miles. Thus we see that the extent of slave territory admitted into the Union since the adoption of the Constitution is considerably more than twice as great as that of the free territory. Does this look like a disposition on the part of the free States to pursue a course of "constant aggression" towards the South on the subject of slavery?

Again: The annexation of Texas was a peculiarly southern measure. The necessity of its acquisition was distinctly placed by Mr. CALHOUN—himself the embodiment of *ultra* southern principles, and the master-spirit of the then Administration—upon the wants of slavery. To the North the measure was distasteful. The North never desired, for its own sake, the acquisition of Texas; nevertheless, the South earnestly desiring it, and Mr. CALHOUN's great influence being brought to bear in its favor, for the reason, chiefly, just given, the North generously acquiesced in the measure, though possessed of ample power to defeat it. Texas was acquired—and, at the cost of a sanguinary and expensive war, we took into the Union, at one swoop, an amount of slave territory equal in extent to the entire original thirteen States. All this the non-slaveholding States might have prevented, but did not. Is this northern "aggression" upon the rights of the South on the slavery question? Is this one of the acts of "aggression" on that subject which is to justify gentlemen of the South in dissolving the Union?

The power of Congress to abolish the slave-trade and slavery at the arsenals, forts and navy yards, and in this District, will hardly be questioned by any of our southern friends. And yet, neither the one nor the other has been abolished to this day in any of those places. Even slave-dealers now drive their occupation in this District at pleasure. Could not the North, had she chosen so to do, have put an end to slavery and the slave-trade in all these places, long ere this? She has forborne to do so. Is that forbearance any part of

the "aggression" upon slavery which now justifies rebellion against the Union?

Now, sir, let us consider those minor charges, so pertinaciously urged against the free States, that make up the sum total of those "aggressions" which justify these gentlemen in dissolving the Union. What are these charges? Why, it is charged, first, that among the people of the free States there is a prevalent and increasing feeling adverse to slavery. This statement, or charge if it be one, I cannot deny. But I am at a loss to conceive how that can be regarded as an "aggression" upon the South, or a justification for the act of overthrowing this Government. Is it required of the free States that they, in aggregate, shall keep a supervision over the views and opinions of their individual citizens on political, moral or any other subjects? Is not this a country of freedom of opinion? And do not our southern friends, even, recognize the principle that "error of opinion may be safely tolerated where reason is left free to combat it?" But are the people of the free States peculiar in their views on this subject? Does not the "aggression" come also from another quarter, and with ten-fold force? How is the feeling in Kentucky where, at a recent election, more than ten thousand votes (as I am informed) were cast in favor of complete emancipation? How is it in other northern slave States where Van Buren, even, at the last Presidential election, found warm supporters, and not a few votes? Now, gentlemen of the South, you cannot prevent these things—this feeling, or sentiment, or whatever else you may call it—even among the people of your own slaveholding States, can you? Are you not asking too much, then, when you require us of the North and West to suppress it among our people? We could not do so, if we would. And, if we had the power, our refusal to exercise it would by no means tend to justify the destruction of this Republic.

Again: It is made an accusation against the free States, that their ministers of the Gospel make slavery a subject of pulpit disquisition, thus increasing the hostility already existing against that institution. To some extent this may be the fact, Mr. Chairman; though I confess that, so far as my own knowledge extends, such instances are exceedingly rare. But what then? Can we prevent that? Ought we to try? Why, on this point we have the authority of the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. BROWN] himself, in favor of the practice. You will recollect, sir, that after treating us to an argument of considerable length designed to show that the moral and religious condition of the negro is improved by his being held in bondage—and after declaring that, in his opinion slavery is "a great moral, social, political, and religious blessing—a blessing to the slave, and a 'blessing to the master;" he drops the subject by saying: "It is no part of my purpose to discuss 'this proposition. The subject, in this view of it, 'belongs rather to the pulpit than to the halls of le-'gislation." Surely, sir, he will now complain no more of sermons on the subject of slavery:—and, when he comes to draft the "declaration" for the "southern confederacy"—(I trust that has not already been done)—he will certainly not include this as one of the "causes which impel us to the separation."

But again: It is charged also against the free States, that we tolerate anti-slavery societies. Yes, sir: we tolerate anti-slavery societies, native American societies, temperance societies, moral reform societies, missionary societies, sewing societies, and possibly—though I am not certain—other societies. Indeed, sir, we are tolerant towards all sorts of societies. We are so, because, first, we have no right to be intolerant in reference to such matters; and, secondly, because there is no necessity for meddling with them. We must hunt for other causes than this, sir, to justify a dissolution of this Union.

Another charge against us is, that we permit men to perambulate the country, lecturing on abolitionism; thus increasing the prejudice already existing against the institution of slavery. There are such men, no doubt. My mind recurs to one just now—one who, in that way, has probably exercised more influence in the North than all the other anti-slavery lecturers put together. This man is Cassius M. Clay, a citizen of the slaveholding State of Kentucky. When our southern friends will agree to seal his mouth on that subject, or confine his efforts to abolish slavery, to the southern States where he belongs, it will be time enough for us of the North to set about devising some mode of confining itinerant lecturers, or prescribing subjects for the exercise of their eloquence. I might mention other lecturers of the same sort for whom the North is indebted to the slave States. But it is unnecessary.

It is also made a matter of accusation against the free States, that anti-slavery presses are kept up there, and that the papers supplied by them are circulated throughout the northern States, and even into the southern; and this is one of the principal causes which render it necessary to establish a "southern confederacy," which shall embrace just exactly the fifteen slaveholding States and no more. We cannot deny, Mr. Chairman, that such papers do circulate quite extensively in some portions of the free States, and some of them, probably, may be found even south of Mason and Dixon's line. I have a paper of that character on my desk now. Here it is, sir. [Holding it up.] It is a fair-looking paper, Mr. Chairman; and I observe that its articles are written with great power. But, I assure you, sir, it is fearfully severe on slavery. And it circulates extensively in the North, too; the number not being less, I am told, than fourteen thousand weekly; besides some thousands which *find their way* into the slaveholding States. Now, I can imagine that you suppose this paper to be published in Vermont. You are mistaken, sir. It is not published there, nor in Massachusetts, nor even north of Mason and Dixon's line. It is published on slave territory, sir; right here in sight of this Capitol, and almost within sound of my voice. Right here, sir, upon the very spot from which the gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN,] is not going to be driven, because it is *his* "*slave territory.*" Yes, gentlemen of the South, from your own midst; from the very doors of your houses, surrounded by your slave population, do you send forth anti-slavery papers, in number more than fourteen thousand per week, to deluge the North, and manufacture public sentiment there. Then you make the circulation of these papers, and the prevalence of a sentiment which they cannot but engender, a pretext for overthrowing this Government. Si-

lence your own Abolition presses; keep for your own use the fourteen thousand abolition papers which you weekly distribute among the people of the North, and then claim, if you will, that the existence of abolition presses in the free States, is justification to you for dissolving the Union.

I remember, also, that there was another anti-slavery press in vigorous and very effective operation for some time in Kentucky——

Mr. BROWN. We destroyed it.

Mr. BISSELL. So you did, by violence. But, by your own laws and the decisions of your own courts, you were punished for it. You were compelled to make compensation in damages for your lawless act. Now, I ask our southern friends, in all good feeling, if they can justly urge as a reason for dissolving the Union annoyances consequent upon a state of things in the free States which they cannot prevent at their own doors?

We are met by the gentleman from North Carolina with another difficulty, for which he holds the North responsible. He suggests that the increasing anti-slavery sentiment in the North will prevent the President from appointing slaveholders to office. For the present let a single fact allay the gentleman's fears. The Presidency has been given to the slaveholding States during forty-eight of the last sixty years. And this, too, though the white population of the slaveholding States has rarely, if at any time, exceeded one-half that of the free States. Of the foreign missions of all grades, *more than a majority* have been given to the South. Of the Cabinet appointments very nearly, if not quite half, have been given to the South. Of the officers in the army and navy it will be found that, considering the relative pop ulation of the free and slaveholding States, at least three out of five have been given to the South. How is it at this very moment, sir, while these very complaints of outrage, insults, tyranny, and loss of office are being made? Why, sir, the President—a majority of the Cabinet—a majority of our foreign ministers—a majority of the members of the Supreme Court, and the presiding officer and clerk of this House—are southern men and slaveholders. Does not this satisfy the gentleman from North Carolina? Surely he might, on this subject, rest quite easy. Another difficulty gravely set forth in that gentleman's speech I ought, perhaps, to notice with becoming seriousness. I allude to the refusal of the New England spinster to take the southern gentleman's arm! That was wrong, unquestionably. But then, these Yankee girls are very independent, and will do just as they please—as some of us have learned from very painful personal experience. But I do not think that a dissolution of the Union need to follow as a necessary consequence. It is a proper subject for negotiation. And, as the lady cannot fail to perceive by this time that she is in danger of becoming a second *Helen*, she will doubtless be more yielding.

Another charge against the free States is that of aiding fugitive slaves to make their escape. That we have vicious people as well as deluded people among us, we do not deny; and that they have aided slaves to elude the pursuit of their owners, is, I regret to say, more than probable. Such acts are not in consonance with the spirit of our Constitution, and they tend directly to destroy that good neighborhood among the people and the States of this Union, which every true-hearted American desires to cultivate. They are acts, against the commission and for the punishment of which the General Government ought to provide. I hope such provision will be made before the close of this session. It need not be expected, however, that any human laws, however rigidly enforced, will wholly remedy this evil. There are bad men in all communities—in the North as well as the South—and one unprincipled man, by enticing away or aiding the escape of a slave, may bring reproaches upon a whole State. I am confident, however, that the number of such men in the free States is very greatly overestimated by gentlemen from the South. They should remember that it takes but very few men to occasion all the annoyance they have suffered in this respect. They should remember, too, that these things are done secretly, and are by no means countenanced by the mass of the people. For my own part, I am ready to go any reasonable length to secure such legislation as will henceforth prevent, as far as possible, this grievance. I desire to see a law enacted this present session, which shall secure to you, as far as practicable, your rights in this respect. The slaves are your own property; recognized as such by that Constitution, every line and every intendment of which I hold sacred. But let me ask gentlemen if they have not negro-stealers in their own States—if they have not every variety of unprincipled characters among them? Neither they nor we can free our respective States from such men; and they should consider whether, if things were reversed—they occupying our position and we theirs—they would be likely to keep themselves freer from just reproach than we have done. I am not so unmindful of truth as to deny that, in respect to the subject now under consideration, some of our southern friends have good cause to complain. But it must have been remarked by all of us that the Representatives from those States which have really been aggrieved in this respect are not those who have threatened us with disunion. These threats have come from the Representatives of States from which, I venture to say, on an average not one slave escapes in five years. Who ever heard of a slave escaping from Mississippi or Alabama? Where does he go to? Who helps him away? Certainly not the people of the North. Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, and Missouri, the only States that are really sufferers by the escape of slaves, do not seem to have dreamed of dissolution as a remedy; while the Representatives from a few of the extreme southern States, whence slaves could no more escape than from the island of Cuba, see ample cause and imperious necessity for dissolving the Union and establishing a "southern confederacy," in the alleged fact that their slaves are enticed away by the citizens of the North.

I believe there remains now but a single other "charge against the North" for me to examine; and that brings me to the subject more immediately under consideration in this committee—the California question. The proceeding which has resulted in bringing California to the door of the Union—is characterized by the honorable gentleman from Mississippi, "as unwise, unpatri-'otic, sectional in its tendencies, *insulting to the* 'South, and in the last degree despicable." "It 'is," says that gentleman, "in derogation of the

'Constitution of the United States, and intended 'to rob the *Southern States* of their just and right-'ful possessions."

It is also objected that these proceedings are likely to introduce into the other House of Congress two "Free Soil Senators" which will destroy the equilibrium now existing there between the North and the South, by giving to the Free States the majority. Well now, sir, what are the proceedings complained of, and for which the Union is to be dissolved and the North held responsible? The President, himself a southern man and a slaveholder, with a Cabinet, a majority of whom are southern men and slave-holders, send Thomas Butler King, a southern man and a slaveholder, to "aid and comfort," encourage and advise the gold diggers in their efforts to join the sisterhood of States. Mr. King returns, bringing as trophies two southern men—one a Mississippian and the other a South Carolinian—(and both slaveholders, I believe) whom our southern President desires to introduce into the Senate of the United States as members of that body. And, thereupon, our southern friends declare that if this infamous measure of "northern aggression" is carried out the Union shall be dissolved and the North held responsible! But what, I pray, has the North had to do with all this? Where can you discover the slightest traces of a northern man's finger in the whole matter? Nay, sir, who are they in Congress who are understood to have distinctly declared themselves in favor of the admission of California since the reception of the message on that subject? Who but Clay, Houston, Benton of the Senate, and Bay, of this House—all slaveholders?

And this California proceeding fills the measure of northern "aggression," and makes it imperative upon "every southern son to rise in rebellion," and exclaim to the North "give us liberty or give us death!" Mr. Chairman, how is it that this matter is expected never to be understood by the people of the South? Surely their Representatives do not intend to deceive them—they could not hope to do so on a subject so plain and palpable.

Now, sir, having disposed of the charges of "northern aggression," of which we have heard so much since the meeting of Congress, I appeal to gentlemen to say whether there is anything in them, taken separately or in the aggregate, which in the slightest degree justifies their threats against the Union? I appeal to them also, to say, whether the overthrow of this Government and the establishment of a "southern confederacy" would mitigate in any degree the evils they complain of. Would anti-slavery societies go down; would anti-slavery presses cease their issues; would lecturers give up their occupation; would Mrs. Partington withhold her sage opinions on the morality of slavery; and would slaves escape no more from the northern slaveholding States? No, gentlemen, every real grievance that now exists would then be aggravated in a tenfold degree. I am at a loss to conceive how on this point there can be any diversity of opinion.

Seeing, then, that all these complaints are either wholly groundless, or exceedingly trivial when considered in the light of causes justifying a dissolution of the Union, I am constrained to believe, and I so declare as the firm conviction of my own mind, that if this slavery question were settled to-day upon terms entirely unobjectionable to the South, the scheme of dismembering the Union would still be prosecuted as now.

Sir, I feel no little remorse for the wrong I did to an eminent citizen last summer. The distinguished Senator from Missouri, Col. Benton, distinctly and boldly declared to the people of that State, that there was a small but active party in the extreme South—at the head of which was an eminent statesman, alike distinguished for his great genius and his restless ambition—who were seeking a dismemberment of the Union in order to the establishment of a separate "southern confederacy." For that I denounced Col. Benton in my State, and to my constituents. May God forgive me for the wrong I did him. *I* was wrong—*he* was right. Yes, sir; with that party, small but active and influential, this slavery agitation is but a mode of effecting the destruction of this Union. It furnishes a convenient pretext and a powerful lever. But, be assured, sir, had they not in the slavery question a plausible pretext for carrying forward their designs, they would hunt for such a pretext elsewhere—or invent one. The *people*, however, alike patriotic and vigilant, will defeat their designs; and in due time they will visit with just retribution those who have sought to mislead them.

But do these gentlemen see no difficulties in the way? I know that, so far as the free States are concerned, they have only to fear "*a little gasconade and a few threats*"—for they have told us so. But is there nothing to be apprehended from the patriotism and firmness of the people of the slave States themselves? How about all those who may choose to hesitate in the States of Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, and Tennessee? They are to be *hanged*—hanged at once, as we learn from the gentleman from North Carolina, [Mr. CLINGMAN.] Now, sir, when the gentleman proceeds to that operation in Kentucky, the hemp-growers of that State will have no occasion to desire a contract for furnishing the Navy with hemp—for they will not be able to supply the demand for home consumption. Truly, that day on which all the people of the slave States who are opposed to disunion shall be hanged in the air, and among them CLAY, UNDERWOOD, BENTON, HOUSTON, BADGER, and others of equal distinction—that day, sir, will be one to be remembered! Gentlemen tell us again and again, that they are not appalled at all this—that nothing need be expected from the fears of "southrons." And the gentleman from North Carolina, especially, seems exceedingly anxious to impress us with a proper appreciation of the prowess of himself and his friends. This is all unnecessary. We have never impugned their bravery, and never doubted it. We do not doubt it now. They unquestionably possess that quality to an equal extent with other men. But their constant disparagement of the personal courage of the people of the free States, can certainly not be expected to heighten our opinion of their own. We may come to think, bye and bye, that they have fallen into two errors—the one the error of underrating the courage of others; and the other I need not particularize.

The gentleman from North Carolina, speaking for himself and his friends, says: "I tell gentle-

'men that this is our slaveholding territory. We 'do not intend to leave it. If they think they can 'remove us, it is a proper case for trial;" and he delights in the prospect that such a contest would not leave a quorum of live members on this floor. The gentleman must excuse us for declining the invitation to so delightful an entertainment. We have no doubt that he and his friends would defend with great resolution this "slaveholding territory." I wish this particular spot of "slaveholding territory" had been always thus defended. I think the Capitol stands now where it did in 1814, does it not, Mr. Chairman? Yes sir; in the same place.

Do you not remember to have read that, in August of that year the British, after spending something like a month on the waters of the Chesapeake, quietly landed a handful (4,500) of sailors and soldiers—enervated by the effects of a long sea voyage—some forty miles from this place? And do you not remember that, dragging by hand three pieces of artillery, two of them three pounders, they made their way over this very "slaveholding territory" to this very Capitol; and, having destroyed our library and public archives, and reduced the Capitol to a heap of smouldering ruins; spending nine days the while on this "slaveholding territory," leisurely reëmbarked for other scenes of operation? Now I do not charge, sir, that our friends then were wanting in bravery. Not at all. I think, indeed, they were as brave then as now. But somehow or other I could never help but think that on that occasion they were—rather bashful.

The gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. Brown,] who thinks that the resistance of the free States to the overthrow of our Government, would be confined to "a little gasconade and a few threats," is nevertheless kind and considerate enough to give us some advice to be acted upon in the event of our not choosing to confine our resistance to a dissolution of the Union within so small a compass. Hearken, Mr. Chairman, to this voice of wisdom:

"When you leave your homes in New England, or in the great West, on this mission of love—this crusade against the South; when you come to take slavery to your bosoms, and to subdue eight millions of southern people, I warn you to make all things ready. Kiss your wives, bid your children a long farewell, make peace with your God; for I warn you that you may never return."

The profound emotion with which this sage admonition was received by the bachelors in this part of the Hall, must have satisfied the gentleman, I think, that due heed will be given it. He also admonishes us more than twice, or thrice of the enormous population now comprised within the slaveholding States. He sets it down at eight millions of freemen. Now the last census, if I am not mistaken, shows the number to have been four millions and six or seven hundred thousand; and by none of the ordinary modes of calculation can that number now exceed six millions. If the increase has really been so great as the gentleman would have us believe, it may be set down as a circumstance, the like of which has never been known in any age or country: and the gentleman may justly claim that his constituents are as eminently distinguished for another quality as for prowess. But this is a small matter, sir; and I merely refer to it as an illustration of the proneness of our southern friends to exaggerate all their capabilities.

This proneness, however, is not always harmless; and I must now refer to a subject which I would gladly have avoided. I allude to the claim put forth for a southern regiment, by the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. Seddon,] of having met and repulsed the enemy on the field of Buena Vista, at that most critical moment when the second Indiana regiment, through an unfortunate order of their colonel, gave way. Justice to the living, as well as to those who fell on that occasion, demand of me a prompt correction of this most erroneous statement. And I affirm distinctly, sir, and such is the fact, that at the time the second Indiana regiment gave way, the Mississippi regiment, for whom this claim is thus gratuitously set up, was not within a mile and a half of the scene of action; nor had it as yet fired a gun, or drawn a trigger. I affirm further, sir, that the troops which at that time met and resisted the enemy, and thus, to use the gentleman's own language, "snatched victory from the jaws of defeat," were the second Kentucky, the second Illinois, and a portion of the first Illinois regiments. It gives me no pleasure, sir, to be compelled to allude to this subject, nor can I perceive the necessity or propriety of its introduction into this debate. It having been introduced, however, I could not sit in silence and witness the infliction of such cruel injustice upon men, living and dead, whose well-earned fame I were a monster not to protect. The true and brave hearts of too many of them, alas, have already mingled with the soil of a foreign country; but their claims upon the justice of their countrymen can never cease, nor can my obligations to them be ever forgotten or disregarded. No, sir. The voice of Hardin—that voice which has so often been heard in this hall as mine now is, though far more eloquently—the voice of Hardin, aye, and of McKee, and the accomplished Clay—each wrapped now in his bloody shroud—their voices would reproach me from the grave, had I failed in this act of justice to them and the others who fought and fell by my side.

You will suspect me, Mr. Chairman, of having warm feelings on this subject. So I have; and I have given them utterance, as a matter of duty. In all this, however, I by no means detract from the gallant conduct and bearing of the Mississippi regiment. At other times and places on that bloody field, they did all that their warmest admirers could have desired. But let me ask again, why was this subject introduced into this debate? Why does the gentleman say, "the troops of the North" gave way, when he means only a single regiment? Why is all this but for the purpose of disparaging the North for the benefit of the South? Why, but for the purpose of furnishing materials for that ceaseless, never-ending, eternal theme of "southern chivalry?"

Mr. Chairman, the people of the free States have as strong an attachment for their brethren of the South at this very moment as they had during the days of the Revolution, or at any subsequent period; and they will not suffer that attachment to be destroyed by disunionists or designing men in the North or in the South. We have our disunionists in the North, sir, and they annoy us not a little. Were your troublesome men in the North, they would be the Garrisons, the Tappans, and the Gerritt Smiths; and were our Garrisons, and Tappans, and Gerritt Smiths in the South,

they would be the disunionists against whom the moderate men of all parties would have to guard. I tell you, sir, that we, the representatives of the North, will aid you to preserve your constitutional rights, as we have ever done. We are not alienated from you; nor have your ultra men yet driven us entirely "to the wall." We are ready to meet you now on any fair grounds and fight with you side by side for your rights and for ours; and defend those rights under the Constitution from encroachment in any quarter. But, sir, we want to hear no more about disunion. We are attached to the Union—aye, devotedly are we attached to it. We regard it as the ark of safety for the American people. We know that the realization of the hopes for human freedom throughout the world depends upon its perpetuity. And shall we ruthlessly crush these hopes forever? Shall that beacon-light which our fathers raised to cheer and guide the friends of freedom be extinguished by us? Extinguish it if you will, but know that when you do it the world is enshrouded in darkness more frightful than Egyptian night.

I know the people of my State. I know the people of the Great West and Northwest; and I know their devotion to the American Union. And I feel warranted in saying in my place here, that when you talk to them of destroying this Union, there is not a man throughout that vast region who will not raise his hand and swear by the Eternal God, as I now do, it shall never be done, if our arms can save it. Illinois proffered to the country nine regiments to aid in the vindication of her rights in the war with Mexico. And should danger threaten the Union from any source, or in any quarter, in the North or in the South, she will be ready to furnish twice, thrice, yes, four times that number, to march where that danger may be, to return when it is passed, or return no more.

Printed at the Congressional Globe Office.

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